

Statue of Liberty coins may have summer debut

By Roger Boye

Collectors could begin ordering Statue of Liberty coins by mid-summer if special legislation continues its progress through Congress.

Earlier this month, the United States House of Representatives approved a bill that authorizes production of 1986-dated commemorative coins in gold, silver and copper-nickel. The voice vote came just 13 days after coinage experts and others had praised the legislation during a Congressional hearing.

The bill now must make its way through the U.S. Senate, a process that could take a month or more. As of March 8, the Senate Banking Committee had yet to schedule a meeting to analyze the proposal, according to a committee staff member.

Under the legislation, officials would issue the coins beginning Oct. 1. Production and order-taking could start much sooner, depending on how quickly the Senate acts.

Most likely, prices of the coins would range from \$6 for a copper-nickel half dollar to about \$150 for a gold piece containing nearly one-quarter ounce of precious metal. Part of the proceeds from each coin sale would support renovation of the Statue of Liberty and immigration facilities on nearby Ellis Island in New York Harbor.

Mint workers would make the commemoratives for sale as collectibles, not for circulation, with production ending by Dec. 31, 1986. The Secretary of the Treasury would select the coin designs.

In the last 30 years Uncle Sam has issued just four commemorative coins, a silver half dollar dated 1982 to mark George Washington's 250th birthday and three pieces [two silver dollars and a \$10 gold coin] to honor and raise money for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

The Olympic coin program ended in late January.

● Want to know how much your old coins are worth, free of charge? Take them to the annual show of the Morton Grove Coin Club between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. March 31 at the American Legion Hall, 6140 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Club experts will make appraisals at the "coin origin and evaluation booth," and as many as 25 dealers will be on hand to sell and buy coins.

Also on March 31, 20 other dealers will do business at the annual show of the Lake County Coin Club. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Swedish Glee Club, 621 Belvidere St., Waukegan. Admission is free.